



# Fisher Den Box

Natural Resources  
Research Institute

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH  
Driven to Discover

**Purpose:** Fishers need large tree cavities for raising their young and for use as resting sites. A lack of larger diameter trees with suitable nesting/resting cavities on the landscape may be contributing to the recent decline in the population—loss of nearly half since 2002, according to the Minnesota DNR. It may take time for fishers to find the box, but even if a fisher doesn't, it will likely benefit something! Martens, Squirrels, Grey fox, Owls, and a variety of rodents may also make use.

*This effort is part of an ongoing study by the **Natural Resources Research Institute** (University of Minnesota) and results are preliminary. More information on the effectiveness of the nest boxes in Minnesota will be collected as the study progresses. The project is funded by the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota's Resources.*

**Habitat:** Fishers live in a variety of young and old forest types in northern Minnesota. Sometimes they are found in southeastern river valleys. They are solitary, except during the breeding season and when the young are with the female. Fishers range over 7 to 10 square miles, traveling at any time of day or night. They are adaptable, but avoid open areas. They prefer the edges of conifer stands when these are adjacent to stands of deciduous trees. Large coarse woody debris (downed trees), hollow standing trees, rock crevices, slash piles, abandoned beaver lodges in dry ponds, and old porcupine dens are preferred resting and foraging sites. For reproduction, female fishers almost exclusively use tree cavities.

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**Fisher Den Box Dimensions:** Two pieces of ¾ inch plywood form the walls with 19mm rigid insulating foam in between (See figure 1). The outside dimensions are roughly 16" wide x 35" tall on each side, while the inside dimensions are 12" on each side. The entrance hole is located near the top corner of the box and is about 3" wide x 4" tall (they don't need much—and the smaller opening may help protect from intruders).

**Hanging the box:** Light chain can be used or plastic-coated cable (3/32", 7x7 cable) to hang boxes on the tree.

**Bedding inside the box:** Naturally occurring dry or untreated wood chips/mulch piled about 6-8" thick (adds insulation)



(Figure 1)



(Figure 2)

**Field Setup:**

1. Choose a robust tree (> 8" DBH), hoist box so that the bottom is 6 feet off of the ground (fishers are excellent climbers and the height adds safety from predators such as a bobcat).
2. Bring chain around tree and attach over the bolt sticking out the front of the box and/or deck screws/lag screws to connect the box to the tree; gravity holds box in place. Alternatively use plastic-coated cable and fasteners to hang from tree (**see figure 2**).
3. Take a sturdy branch and screw (deck screws with square bits) it into the box and into the tree. The branch adds stability to the box and allows for a perch of sorts (**see figure 3**).



**(Figure 3)**



**(A fisher exits the nest box)**